

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 00234 121621Z
ACTION NEA-10

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R 121316Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1283

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0234

STADIS////////////////////////////////

NEA/ARN FOR DRAPER FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN JEWS

REF: DAMASCUS 0157

1. COS SHIHABI SOUGHT TO CLEAR UP JANUARY 10 ONE MISCONCEPTION WE HAD BEEN UNDER CONCERNING NOTATION OF RELIGION ON SYRIAN ID CARDS. TWO YEARS AGO, ACCORDING SHIHABI, A NEW ID CARD WAS ISSUED TO ALL SYRIAN CITIZENS FOLLOWING FORMAT DECREED BY THE ARAB LEAGUE. THIS CARD HAS A SPACE FOR RELIGION. ALL SYRIAN CITIZENS CARRYING THE NEW CARDS ARE IDENTIFIED AS EITH MOSLEM, CHRISTIAN OR JEW, WIHTOUT INDICATION OF SECT IN THE CASES OF THE FIRST TWO. WHAT HAS NOW BEEN ELIMINATED AS FAR AS THE JEWS ARE CONCERNED IS THE LARGE RED STAMP ACROSS THE CARD, BUT THE TERM /MUSAWI" IS STILL TO BE TYPED IN ON THE "RELIGION" LINE. AS SYRIA HAD MADE CLEAR, IT WAS ABOLISHING ALL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SYRIAN CITIZENS IN EVERY RESPECT EXCEPT EMIGRATION.

2. I TOLD SHIHABI THAT EMIGRATION WAS, OF COURSE, THE MAIN PROBLEM AND ONE WHICH WULD NOT GO AWAY. SHIHABI
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SAID "TIHE TIME WILL COME TO DEAL WITH THIS AND I HAVE SO INFORMED THE COMMUNITY LEADERS."

3. COMMENT:

I WAS PLEASED TO HEAR THE MORE FORTHCOMING NOTE ON SHIHABI'S PART RE FUTURE EMIGRATION. THIS CONTRASTED

SHARPLY WITH HIS TERSE REFUSAL IN DECEMBER TO DISCUSS
ISSUE LABELLING IT "A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE."

4. ON BASIS OF SAMPLE CHECK OF SYRIAN ID CARDS OF MISSION EMPLOYEES,
MOSLEM AND CHIRSTIAN, WE FIND THAT LINE MARKED " RELIGION."
HAS BEEN LEFT BLANK IN ALL CASES. HOLDERS INFORM US
THAT CITIZENS MAY REQUEST THEIR RELIGIOUS
AFFILIATION BE NOTED ON THEIR ID CARDS, BUT INTERIOR
MINISTRY DOES NOT NORMALLY FILL SPACE UNLESS REQUESTED.
WE WILL TRY TO MONITOR APPLICATION OF THIS NEW MEASURE
TO JEWISH ID CARDS OVER COMING MONTHS TO DETERMINE WHAT
PRACTICE DEVELOPS. AS REPORTED DAMASCUS 0014, AT LEAST
ONE JEWISH ID CARD INSPECTED IN EARLY JANUARY CARRIED
NO CITATION OF RELIGION.
MURPHY

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NNN

Message Attributes

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